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IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

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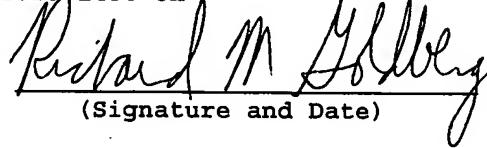
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July 15,  
2004

PRELIMINARY AMENDMENT

Mail Stop PCT  
Commissioner for Patents  
P.O. Box 1450  
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

Dear Sir:

Prior to examination of the above-identified application, please amend the same as follows:

Amendments to the specification begin on page 2 of this paper.

Amendments to the claims are reflected in the listing of claims which begins on page 4 of this paper.

Amendments to the Abstract begin on page 9 of this paper.

Amendments to the Drawings begin on page 10 of this paper and include both an attached replacement sheet and an annotated sheet showing changes.

The Remarks begin on page 11 of this paper.